

The RDECOM LCMC — Increasing Efficiency Through Improved Collaboration

MG Roger A. Nadeau

The U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM) and the Life Cycle Management Commands (LCMCs) have been in existence for about two years now. Much has already been written about the LCMCs. Let me focus my comments on RDECOM.

An LCMC enterprise goal is to eliminate unknown redundancy in Army RDE to maximize return on investment (ROI) across the board. This will result in more technology being spiraled to Soldiers faster. (U.S. Air Force photo by SSGT Shane A. Cuomo.)

As a start, let me say that I am a strong supporter of the RDECOM concept. While that might not surprise anyone, since I am its commander, it's equally important to state that I was a skeptic on day one of my assignment. That skepticism originated from multiple program executive office (PEO) jobs over time and concerns about the efficiency of Army labs. Today's environment and the critical research, development and engineering (RDE) demands of our Future Force make a strong RDECOM an absolute necessity. Let me start explaining that last comment from the local level and work up the command chain.

Did the professional daily life of an RDECOM employee change the day



after the RDECOM and LCMCs came into existence? Generally, no. RDECOM employees matrixed to the PEOs and program managers remain matrixed. Lab workers still worked in

the labs. Basically, not much changed that was visible at the individual worker level. The value of an RDECOM becomes more visible as you move up in the organizational structure.



Greater Value to LCMCs and PEOs

The good news is that the LCMCs and their supported PEOs get greater value from the U.S. Army's Research, Development and Engineering Centers (RDECs). The better news, and one of RDECOM's many values, is that the required support does not necessarily come from the most local RDEC. The new organizational construct now provides a more effective, efficient mechanism to draw on the collective Army RDE organization to get the right R&D expertise working a problem. And that's not always a local solution for an LCMC. U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development and Engineering Center engineers might be the best talent to respond to an Aviation Missile Command LCMC issue, or Aviation Missile RDECOM

engineers to a TACOM LCMC issue. Prior to the existence of an RDECOM headquarters, those type actions were the rare exception. Today, they're becoming more the standard rule.

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Along that same general thought process, the professional growth of our scientists and engineers is being broadened through developmental assignments between the labs and centers as well as between RDECOM and the LCMCs. Matrixed engineers won't stay matrixed for their entire careers either. Could this have been done without an RDECOM headquarters? Yes. But the fact is, it wasn't. A consolidated headquarters at the lowest possible level created the right operating environment to facilitate this kind of change.



MG Roger A. Nadeau listens to suggestions from Soldiers and civilians during one of his many visits to various research centers and laboratories. (Photo courtesy of RDECOM.)

Improved Communications

Communications between the myriad Army labs and centers has increased exponentially through the existence of a central headquarters. Prior to RDECOM, the R&D focus was so local, maximizing the national and international research and development talent internal to the Army was grossly suboptimized. This was clearly not intentional. Great folks accomplished great things for our Soldiers under the old organizational construct. The continuing growth and performance maturity of both the LCMCs and RDECOM are opening our collective eyes to just how much more efficient we can be for an Army at war and an

Army transitioning to meet the needs of the future. Another growing value of an RDECOM construct is the headquarters' ability to facilitate frequent contact and cross-talk between directors that only a shared common headquarters can do. Again, this is something that was not maximized under the old organizational structure.



An M2A2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, equipped with Reactive Armor Tiles, moves into an overwatch position near a traffic control point outside of Ad Duluyiah, Iraq. These Soldiers are from Alpha Troop, 1st Battalion, 4th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Infantry Division. Constant innovation and testing result in equipment and accessories that keep our Soldiers safe. (U.S. Air Force photo by SSGT Shane A. Cuomo.)



RDECOM RDE initiatives will ensure that Army Ground Combat Systems such as this Stryker vehicle will perform at optimum levels regardless of environment, climatic conditions or operational missions. Here, a squad from 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, patrols Mosul, Iraq, during a downpour. (U.S. Air Force photo by TSGT John Foster.)

Better communication and coordination between Army RDECs is just part of the value of a centralized headquarters. Using a board of directors organization at the RDECOM level continues to facilitate coordination and communication beyond Army boundaries. RDECOM headquarters continues to create synergy with the national labs, other service R&D organizations, international organizations, academia and private industry — just to name a few. More frequent contact creates a more open communications environment, which helps focus R&D at all levels. The goal is to eliminate unknown redundancy in research, development and engineering to better maximize the ROI across the board. The result is

greater technology delivered to the Soldier faster through collaborative co-operation. And who wins? The Soldier.

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Increased Efficiency

Let me wrap this up by stating what is arguably the greatest value of an RDECOM to the Army. For the first time, we have a headquarters at the lowest possible level responsible for creating a strategic vision for Army RDE. Resources are allocated against the goals and objectives approved by the headquarters. Constant monitoring at the headquarters level allows for the reallocation of resources to meet the changing demands of an Army at war. It also directs course corrections relative to technology development priorities based on

numerous factors as the Army continues its transformation. Prior to the existence of an RDECOM, the process was inefficient and suboptimized. In two short years, the organizational construct of an RDECOM has already proven its value and has only just scratched the surface of what it can do for our Soldiers and the Army.

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